

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7694

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINT, SP, GW

SUBJECT: COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN THE SPANISH MILITARY

REF: BONN 17824 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THE FACT THAT THE SPANISH MILITARY FORCES HAVE BEEN A PRIME CP TARGET FOR YEARS SHOULD NOT AUTOMATICALLY LEAD TO THE ASSUMPTION, NOW THAT THE POLITICAL TRANSITION HAS BEGUN, THAT THE COMMUNISTS ENJOY SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE IN THE MILITARY. END SUMMARY.

1. AS SEEN FROM MADRID, THE EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN BY FRG DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER TO AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND REGARDING COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN THE SPANISH ARMY ARE YET ANOTHER REFLECTION OF THE WIDESPREAD UNCERTAINTIES REGARDING SPAIN AS IT BEGINS TO FACE A PERIOD OF GREATER POLITICAL CHANGE AFTER DECADES OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE. (A SOMEWHAT SIMILAR SENTIMENT IS ATTRIBUTED TO "PENTAGON ANALYSTS" BY GUY HALVERSON IN OCT 31 CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR: CONFIDENTIAL

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"THE ANALYSTS SEE ALREADY-STRONG LEFT-WING PRESSURES WITHIN THE

302,000-MAN SPANISH MILITARY STRENGTHENING AFTER GENERAL FRANCO LEAVES THE SCENE..." THE TRUE EXTENT OF COMMUNIST STRENGTH IN SPAIN IS NOT PRECISELY KNOWN, SINCE IT HAS YET TO BE TESTED. CERTAINLY THE EXTENT OF ITS PENETRATION IN THE SPANISH MILITARY, WHERE IT PERFORCE REMAINS LARGELY UNDER DEEP COVER, IS EVEN LESS CERTAIN. AN ARMED FORCE WHICH DRAWS 85 PERCENT OF ITS STRENGTH AT ANY ONE TIME FROM A SYSTEM OF UNIVERSAL CONSCRIPTION WOULD BE SURPRISING INDEED IF IT DID NOT REPRESENT ALL ELEMENTS--INCLUDING SOME CLANDESTINE COMMUNISTS--OF THE SOCIETY WHICH IT REPRESENTS.

2. ESTIMATES OF COMMUNIST PARTY (PCE) MEMBERSHIP VARY FROM 5,000 TO CONSIDERABLY LARGER FIGURES, WHILE ESTIMATES OF THEIR VOTING APPEAL IN A FREE ELECTION FOCUS LARGELY AROUND 10 PERCENT. THE SO-CALLED DEMOCRATIC MILITARY UNION (UMD), THE FLEDGLING PROGRESSIVE (BUT NONCOMMUNIST) ORGANIZATION OF RELATIVELY YOUNGER MILITARY OFFICERS FROM WHOSE RANKS PURPORTEDLY HAVE COME MOST OF THE 13 OFFICERS ARRESTED OVER THE LAST 3 MONTHS FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY, IS SAID TO HAVE A FOLLOWING OF SYMPATHIZERS ANYWHERE BETWEEN SEVERAL HUNDRED AND CLOSE TO 1,000 (EVEN THE LATTER FIGURE BEING A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE OFFICER CORPS). INFORMED ESTIMATES REGARDING POLITICAL PREFERENCES WITHIN NCO RANKS ARE NOT AVAILABLE, BUT THE BULK ARE CERTAINLY CONSERVATIVE. THE NCO CORPS IN THE SPANISH ARMY DOES NOT, IN ANY EVENT, LEND THE CONTINUITY TO THE SPANISH MILITARY THAT THE MORE PROFESSIONAL NCO'S OF THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN ARMIES ARE CREDITED WITH. WHILE IN MOST ARMIES NCO'S TEND TO REMAIN WITH UNITS FOR YEARS, UNLIKE OFFICERS WHO MOVE MORE FREQUENTLY, SPANISH OFFICERS TEND TO REMAIN ASSIGNED TO UNITS MUCH LONGER THAN NCO'S. THUS NCO'S PROBABLY DO NOT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE THE POLITICAL OUTLOOK OF SPANISH ARMY UNITS IN THE SAME WAY JUNIOR OFFICERS DO.

3. IN ANY EVENT, ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE MILITARY IS POLITICIZED, AND THIS POLITICIZATION IS STILL MORE AT THE TOP AND TO THE RIGHT OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM THAN IT IS IN THE DIRECTION OF RADICAL POLITICAL CHANGE IN SPAIN. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT WITHIN THE OFFICER CORPS FOR PROFESSIONAL REFORM COULD NOT BE MANIPULATED IN A TIME OF POLITICAL STRESS
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INTO BECOMING SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL REFORM MOVEMENTS (FOR MORE DETAILED ANALYSIS, SEE MADRID A-213 OF OCTOBER 31, 1975).

4. LEBER'S REFERENCE TO A STATEMENT BY THE UK COMMUNIST MINE WORKERS UNION LEADER RE IDEOLOGICAL BROTHERS IN THE SPANISH ARMY IS NOT SOMETHING WE HAVE SEEN BUT STRIKES US AS PERHAPS PRIMARILY AN ECHO OF THE LINE THE PEC'S SANTIAGO CARRILLO WOULD HAVE OBSERVERS BELIEVE. CARRILLO HAS FOR SOME TIME BEEN DIRECTING

APPEALS IN HIS RADIO BROADCASTS AND IN OTHER WAYS TO THE SPANISH MILITARY, AND ALLEGES THAT THE PCE ALREADY HAS A LARGE FOLLOWING IN THE MILITARY. HE MUST REALIZE THAT MILITARY ACQUIESCENCE IS ESSENTIAL TO LEGALIZATION OF THE CP.

5. IN SUM, WE TAKE NO ISSUE WITH THE SUGGESTION THAT THE SPANISH COMMUNISTS ARE WELL-ORGANIZED, DETERMINED, AND MAKING EFFORTS TO INFILTRATE THE SPANISH MILITARY. HOWEVER, THE UNSTATED IMPLICATION IN SUCH EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN THAT IN SPAIN'S TRANSITION THE COMMUNISTS WILL ENJOY THE KIND OF INFLUENCE IN THE MILITARY WHICH THEY HAVE HAD IN PORTUGAL IS CERTAINLY UNFOUNDED.
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